

2/18/2009

Dear Committee Members,

My name is LeeAnn Marino. I have been living with HIV/AIDS since April of 1992. I am furious that Governor Rell has decided to try and balance the budget on the backs of the less fortunate. I am a Medicaid/Medicare recipient, the Co-pays for medications and doctor visits will be a hardship for me. Even with a cap of \$20.00 a month, for prescriptions, that would be money taken from my food budget. It would also be a hardship for me to have to pay for my Medicare Part D coverage.

The next thing that would have a grave impact on me is the prior authorization for high cost medications. This would mean that I would most likely miss doses of my HIV meds while I wait for authorization. Missing doses of my HIV meds would cause my viral load to start going up which would cause my immune system to start getting weaker, and possibly becoming resistant to the medication.

The next thing that would affect me would be my having to enroll in a benchmark plan which is a cheaper plan but would most likely not cover my HIV meds. The meds are keeping me alive and healthy.

The next thing that would have an impact on me is tightening early refill criteria under DSS pharmacy program. Currently, prior authorization is needed for prescriptions refilled before 85% of a fill has been used. This proposal would reduce that to 75% , particularly impacting individuals whose doctors increase a dosage mid-month and who then find they are unable to obtain the right amount of the medication until the following month, unless they manage to navigate a prior authorization system designed to restrict access.

And last but not least is the elimination of dental coverage except for emergencies for adults on Medicaid and SAGA. Emergency care is far more expensive than routine dental care. For a person with HIV, not being able to get regular dental care could mean getting an infection in the mouth which could travel to the rest of the body causing that person to become gravely ill and possibly ending up in the hospital, which is also more expensive than routine dental care.

Thank You for listening to my testimony and considering the impact these changes would be for myself and many others across the state.